

## Interpersonal Development of Men and Women in the Church

1. Objective of talk: ~~Like~~ to invite you to think about philosophical foundations for sex and gender identity and some potential applications of these philosophical concepts to issues of vocation and mission in the Church.

### 2. Background

In the history of the Church there have been three main theories of sex identity called sex unity, polarity, and complementarity. (Explain chart)

- equality
- differentiation
- unity- Plato (St. Paul- Augustine) neither male nor female
- polarity- Aristotle- Augustine- St. Thomas woman not by herself in image of God (no reverse in church; radical feminism)
- complementarity-Augustine-Hildegard
- fractional- integral (explain structure): a man different from woman in biological structure (chrom, hormone balance, anatomy; life experience as boy or girl since birth; in inherited archetypes, language, culture; and so forth) ---a man equal to a woman in powers and faculties of soul, sensation, judgment, will, capacity to act, etc.

### 3. Contemporary situation in Church

- development of personalism (Mounier, Marcel, PJP II)
- person in Image of God
- God is Three Persons in one Divine Nature
- How reflect that image?
  - past: as single man (fear of Polytheism)
  - present: as community of persons: PJP II Homilies on Genesis

"...man became the image and likeness of God not only through his own humanity, but also through the communion of persons which man and woman form right from the model, not so much in the moment of solitude as in the moment of communion. He is, in fact, right "from the beginning" not only an image in which there is reflected the solitude of a Person who rules the world, but also and essentially, an image of an inscrutable divine communion of persons."

3. Sacramental marriage is prime model for community of persons. Man and woman are in a relationship of integral complementarity: they are equal as human beings, but different as man and as woman, and unique as persons. This leads to the blessing of fertility of their relationship  $1+1=3$ . See Jean Vanier in *Man and Woman He Made Them*:

"...to be fruitful requires two people. No one can be fruitful alone. It is the reality of the seed and the earth, of the man and the woman. Biological fecundity demands that there be two. It is the same with spiritual fecundity. A child grows harmoniously when he feels loved by two people, drawn into the circle of love which flows between the father and the mother. In the Christian vision of sexuality, man and woman render present the mystery of the Trinity. Our God is not a solitary God; he is one God in three Persons. In fecundity, there is also a trinitarian mystery."

4. Complement vocations in the Church is a developing model for community of persons by PJP II. In Poland last June 1 he stated in a Mass to Priests and Religious that this community of persons can be found in the complement interaction of three different vocations in a single parish: For example, among a Sacramental Priest, a woman religious, and a lay person working on a common project.

a. Hans Urs von Balthasar in *Christian States of Life* developed throughout a section of 175 pages the different ways in which Complement vocations image the Trinity. He was particularly interested in the variety of ways of what he called the "Priestly, Lay, and Evangelical states of life" could build up a communion of persons. In one model, the Priestly vocation concentrates on the Sacramental life of the Church, the lay vocation on sanctifying the secular world, and Religious men and women on witnessing through living under the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

b. Many ways to explore these relations of integral complementarity which each person authentically lives her or her vocation in relation with one another to build up the Kingdom of God, in the image of God as a community of persons.

#### 5. Key concept: Gift of self

a. How can we serve one another as the Son serves the Father, the Holy Spirit serves the Son, and so on?

b. What forms can the model of "gift of self" take in the contemporary Church?

c. Must be discovered in the building up of the communion of persons itself. Not abstract, but concrete.

d. Must avoid the confusion of seeking to be the other; or what has been referred to as "the laicization of the clergy" and "the clericalization of the laity"

e. Must avoid sliding into unisex (or loss of differentiation) and polarity (or loss of equality in dignity and worth). (sterile options)

f. Integral complementarity calls for living in the tension of equality and differentiation in communities of persons, and discovering the blessings of fertility as God will chose to reveal them. As long as we are willing to share our gifts with one another, in a spirit of service, and for the building up of the Church, then our work will be blessed and fruitful.



1. Pope John Paul II, Original Unity of Man & Woman: Catechesis -  
The Book of Genesis (Boston: St Paul Editions, 1981) 73-4
2. Jean Vanier, Man and Woman He Made Them (New York: Paulist Press, 1985) p.142. Id.
3. Hans Urs von Balthasar, The Christian States of Life (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1971) 251-387. 83